

Ngày 27, tháng 5, 2008: Dân Biểu Loretta Sanchez Cộng Hòa Nhân Dân Việt Nam Caucus
Bắt Đầu Năm Mới • Tình Trạng Nhân Quyền • Cộng Hòa Nhân Dân Việt Nam

Sau khi buổi lễ kỷ niệm "Tình trạng nhân quyền" tại Việt Nam và nhà hàng Á Á Á cho các cuộc họp báo
thông tin nhân quyền Việt Nam-Mỹ vào Thứ Sáu, ngày 14, tháng 5 vừa qua, Dân Biểu Loretta Sanchez cùng các dân
biểu thuộc nhóm Vietnam Caucus tại Hạ Viện Hoa Kỳ đã gặp gỡ các thành viên Ngoại Giao Đoàn Mỹ và thắp
lửa nến kỷ niệm nửa thế kỷ tình trạng nhân quyền tại Việt Nam. Xin quý vị xem lá thư đính kèm ở đây.

May 27, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice

Secretary of State

Department of State

2201 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

As the Department of State prepares for the upcoming United States-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue on May 29, 2008 in Hanoi, we write to bring two very important items to your attention. First, on May 14, 2008, the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam held a hearing entitled "Human Rights Conditions in Vietnam and Suggestions for the United States-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue." Four experts on Vietnamese human rights issues provided recommendations for the Human Rights Dialogue at this hearing. We have included copies of their testimony for your review and would like to highlight many of their recommendations. Second, we commend the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom for their May 2008 Annual Report in which they recommended that the United States should again designate Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). We concur with this recommendation and urge you to reconsider your decision not to follow it.

At the May 14 hearing of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, four experts on Vietnamese human rights issues provided testimony, including Commissioner Leonard Leo of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom; Do Hoang Diem, Chairman of Viet Tan; Binh Nguyen, Co-Chair of the Non-Violent Movement for Democracy in Vietnam; and Tammy Tran, President of the Vietnamese Alliance to Combat Trafficking. All offered suggestions for this upcoming Dialogue, including:

- Release of prisoners;
- Revision of laws to reflect international human rights standards;
- Asylum and refugee issues;
- Repeal of catch-all national security statutes;
- Independence of media;
- Respect for public assembly and freedom of association;
- Freedom of information and freedom of expression;
- Cessation of secret detentions and harassment of relatives of democracy advocates;
- Encouragement of a timetable for free and fair elections within Vietnam under the sponsorship of the United Nations;
- Assurances that the Government of Vietnam will abide by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, particularly in light of Vietnam's election to the UN Security Council; and
- Support for the establishment of non-governmental organizations and civil society in Vietnam.

In testimony before the United States Senate's Foreign Relations Committee in March 2008, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill stated that "all those individuals that the United States had identified as prisoners of concern for reasons connected to their faith" had been released by Vietnam and that for this and other reasons Vietnam "no longer qualifies as a severe violator of religious freedom." However, in its May 2008 Report, the Commission calls into question the State Department's rationale for this finding:

The Commission believes that the State Department's attempts to define religious prisoners as those arrested for "reasons connected to their faith" makes a too rigid distinction between "political" and "religious" activity not consistent with international human rights law. The Commission maintains that there may be scores of religious "prisoners of concern," including well-known religious freedom advocates such as Fr. Nguyen Van Ly and Nguyen Van Dai; imprisoned members of Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Khmer Buddhist religious communities; and United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) and Catholic religious leaders held under administrative detention, in violation of core human rights protections, including the freedom of religion. In many of the most recent cases, those detained organized or participated in peaceful demonstrations against religious freedom restrictions, monitored and publicized religious freedom abuses, or publicly called for legal or political reforms needed to guarantee religious freedom.

In addition to religious "prisoners of concern" the Commission's report also details a pattern of abuses and restrictions affecting most of Vietnam's diverse religious communities. We are concerned about the discrepancy between the findings of the State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and believe Vietnam is "a severe violator of religious freedom" that warrants re-designation as a CPC under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

At the upcoming Human Rights Dialogue in Hanoi, religious freedom concerns should be an important issue of discussion, and we request that representatives from the Commission be included in the delegation attending the Dialogue.

The United States should not shy away from using any of the diplomatic or economic tools available to increase pressure on Vietnam on the human rights issue. The return of Vietnam to the CPC list would send the signal that the United States will not idly stand by while gross violations of human rights continue to occur. We hope that you will reconsider the decision not to place Vietnam on the CPC list this year and request that you consider the recommendations listed above for the upcoming May 29th U.S.-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue.

We urge the Department of State to push for concrete and tangible results from this dialogue and look forward to hearing of the results of this meeting.

Sincerely,

Zoe Lofgren

Christopher Smith

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez

Tom Davis

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Edward Royce

Daniel Lungren

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable David J. Kramer, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor